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FM REO KIRKUK

TO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0467

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0504

INFO RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 0146

RUEHMOS/REO MOSUL 0194

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BAGHDAD FOR POL, POLMIL, NCT

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TAGS: PGOV IZ TU

SUBJECT: KRG UNIFICATION: AWAITING A DEPUTY PM

REF: A) KIRKUK 0023, B) KIRKUK 0012, C) KIRKUK 0008

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. On February 2, KNA Speaker Mufti, Deputy Speaker Kirkuki and Kirkhi Alti Barmakh, the leader of the KNA's Turcoman bloc, all expected the PUK to nominate KRG-Sulaymaniyah PM Omar Fattah, PUK Erbil office director Arsalan Baiz or KRG-S Deputy PM Emad Ahmed to be Deputy PM for a unified KRG. Mufti expected the choice would be either Fattah or Baiz. They are from Sulaymaniyah; that would balance Speaker Mufti and Deputy Speaker Kirkuki, who are both from Erbil. Mufti thought Fattah would accept the post if President Talabani asked him "publicly and seriously." Mufti hoped for a PUK decision in the next few days, well before mid-February. The PUK and the KDP have already decided which parties will head which KRG ministries. Five ministries would go beyond the KDP or PUK: one ministry each to the Turcomans, the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Kurdistan Islamic Gathering, the Communists and the Assyrians. Mufti thought the Kurds should offer minorities two more cabinet slots, but without portfolio. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (SBU) The Acting Regional Coordinator (RC(A)) spoke separately on February 2 with Kurdistan National Assembly Speaker Adnan Mufti (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan), Deputy Speaker Kamal Kirkuki (Kurdistan Democratic Party), and Kirkhi Alti Barmakh, the leader of the KNA's Turcoman bloc and from the Turcoman Democratic Party, which is close to the KDP.

¶13. (SBU) All three noted how unification would strengthen the KRG in its dealings with Baghdad and in providing services. Kirkhi said that it would preempt the Baghdad question of, if Kirkuk joined the KRG, which KRG (Sulaymaniyah or Erbil) Baghdad should join it to. He also commented that neighboring countries opposed the KRG and unification would help in dealing with them.

¶14. (C) Deputy PM. In all conversations, the same three names came up as the probable PUK nominee to be Deputy PM: KRG-Sulaymaniyah PM Omar Fattah, PUK Erbil office director Arsalan Baiz, and KRG-S Deputy PM Emad Ahmed. Mufti expected the choice would be either Fattah or Baiz. Although Fattah backed Ahmed, Ahmed was from Erbil, and that would give too many senior KRG jobs to those hailing from Erbil since both Speaker Mufti and Deputy Speaker Kirkuki are both from there. Although Fattah was reluctant, Mufti thought Fattah would accept the post if President Talabani asked him "publicly and seriously." Kirkuki repeated to RC(A) his public remarks that the KDP would be content with whomever the PUK named as Deputy PM.

¶ 15. (C) In their February 2 conversation, Mufti told RC(A) that he hoped for a PUK decision in the next few days, well before mid-February. Kirkuki recounted that, at the KNA launch for a unified KRG on January 21, President Talabani had spoken of naming a deputy PM that week. When Mufti had said "next week," Talabani had bristled and insisted "this week."

¶ 16. (C) Ministries. The PUK and the KDP have already decided which parties will head which KRG ministries. Mufti said five ministries would go beyond the KDP or PUK: one ministry each to the Turcomans, the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Kurdistan Islamic Gathering, the Communists and the Assyrians. Speaking personally, Mufti thought the Kurds should offer minorities two more cabinet slots, but without a ministry, i.e., the regional equivalent to Ministers of State: "Ministers of the Region." He said he had proposed using secret ballots to pick ministers. Kirkuki (as KRG-E Interior Minister Sinjari did ref A) assured RC(A) that KDP supported having technocratic, non-partisan ministries.

¶ 17. (C) Turcoman Quarrels. Kirkhi's "Turcoman Democratic Party" supports Kirkuk's joining the KRG. He accused the Iraqi Turcoman Front of opposing this simply because it followed Turkey's orders. He noted that various Turcoman parties got financial support from the PUK, SCIRI etc. He argued KRG unification would increase Turcoman unity. (COMMENT: We doubt it.)

DEAN